

SPECIFICATIONAL WH-QUESTIONS

Ileana Comorovski
Université de Nancy 2 / ATILF

Mayfest 2005, University of Maryland

Basic data and goals of the talk. We will examine copular wh-questions in two Romance languages, French and Romanian, concentrating on French copular questions introduced by *quel* ('what', 'which', 'who') and Romanian copular questions introduced by *care* ('which'):

- 1) French: Quelle est la capitale de la Moldavie?
- 2) Romanian: Care e capitala Moldovei?
'What is the capital of Moldavia?'

We will argue that these questions are the wh-interrogative counterpart of specificational copular clauses (Higgins (1973): e.g. *The winner is Kate, The guests were Leslie and Tom*). We will further argue that the semantics and morpho-syntax of these wh-questions support the existence of a copula of specification. Finally, we will examine the relation between the interpretation of specificational wh-questions and discourse-linking.

Specificational wh-questions and individual concepts. The morpho-syntax of French questions introduced by *quel* is analyzed in Ruwet (1982) and Comorovski (2004): *quel* occurring without a following noun has an extremely limited distribution, appearing only as an internal argument of *être* ('be') and *devenir* ('become'), verbs on which *quel* is morpho-syntactically dependent. Comorovski (2004) notices that the predicate 'quel+être' allows only a non-rigid designator as a subject (i.e. a DP of type <s,e>).

The Romanian copular question in (2) is introduced by the interrogative pronoun *care*. Generally, *care* is discourse-linked, just like English *which*; this fact is extensively illustrated in Comorovski (1996). Interestingly, *care* can 'lose' its D-linked feature in exactly one context, namely when it is selected by the copula. Romanian copular questions introduced by non-D-linked *care* require a non-rigid designator as a subject.

We have therefore found two properties shared by French *quel*-questions and Romanian copular *care*-questions (where *care* is non-D-linked): (i) they are introduced by interrogative pronouns that are selected only by copulative verbs; (ii) their subject must be a non-rigid designator. Rigid designators (proper names, demonstratives, first and second person pronouns, non-anaphoric third person pronouns) and quantifying DPs are excluded as subject of these questions.

The class of DPs that these questions allow as a subject is identical to the class of DPs allowed as subjects of specificational copular clauses; we base this observation on the description of specificational clauses in Higgins (1973). Given this identity, French *quel*-questions and Romanian copular *care*-questions will be analyzed as instances of specificational clauses. In the light of our generalization about the non-rigidity of specificational subjects, we conclude that specificational clauses, whether declarative or wh-interrogative, are characterized by the presence of the copula of specification: this copula denotes a relation between an individual concept and the value of the concept at a particular index. Romero (forthcoming) reaches a similar conclusion about specificational copular declaratives, based on a quite different type of data.

Specificational wh-questions and maximality. Specificational wh-questions with a definite

subject ask for the identity (at a relevant index) of the maximal individual described by the subject. This fact parallels the semantics of declarative specificational clauses with a definite subject, since the complement of the copula must pick as a referent the maximal individual that fits the description provided by the subject. (For specificational clauses with indefinite subjects, see Mikkelsen (2004)). The fact that a specificational wh-question asks for a maximal individual is marked in Romanian on the wh-DP. As shown in Comorovski (1996), discourse-linked wh-DPs are associated with a maximality condition. The interrogative pronoun *care* occurring in specificational wh-questions, although not D-linked, shares with the other occurrences of *care*, all of which are D-linked, their maximality requirement. We will discuss the relation between the non-rigidity of specificational subjects, discourse-linking and maximality.

References

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